Our Hitler
Goebbels' 1942 Speech on Hitler's Birthday

The film "The Great King" is playing in the movie theaters of the Reich. It treats the hard trials and historic challenges that Frederick the Great endured during the critical phase of the Seven Years War, before he led his army to final victory over his enemies. The film takes the unique figure of this great Prussian king off his pedestal and removes the anecdotal incrustations in order to show us how things really were and what really happened. The film avoids the usual portrayal of the attributes of this historic figure, instead giving us a personal and human picture of a unique statesman and military genius. As curious as it may sound, today he seems to us even greater in his defeats than in his victories.

Shallow popular accounts of the great Prussian king sometimes make it seem as if he dealt easily with the difficulties and problems of warfare. In this film, however, we see a struggling titan with a deep heart who endured for seven years an inferno of sorrow, pain of every conceivable physical and spiritual nature, the deepest human disappointments, and the most difficult tests. He was alone, deserted, almost toothless, the wreck of a man plagued with gout. Then came the day when Berlin jubilantly received its returning king. He sat in tears in the Charlottenburg Palace chapel after an almost inconceivable release from the nameless miseries and anxieties he had faced as the thundering tones of Grauns' "Te deum" resounded from the organ.

It is clear that such a portrayal of the life and struggles of our greatest Prussian-German king is somewhat risky, even if it is more historically accurate and more educational for our day. It is more pleasant to present historical persons and events in a way pleasing to the average person, Nothing is easier to believe than that the great victories in history were the result of military and political superiority, that the goddess of war ever smiles, even to think that presenting an occasional danger or threat defames the reputation of historical personages.

This film presents history from a different standpoint. It shows the human side of a true genius as a way of emphasizing his superhuman attributes. The greatness of this historic figures grows not from themselves, but rather from the weight of fate they bear. The physical suffering, the spiritual burdens and the temptations of the heart allow the character of a great man to stand out

more vividly, they mark his outline more clearly. The film shows why Frederick II earned the right, uniquely, to bear the name "Great." Despite the numbing blows of fate that often drove him to the edge of the abyss, he found the strength to rise triumphant above the trials and defeats. He set a shining example of steadfastness in misfortune to his people, his soldiers, his doubting generals, wavering ministers, conspiring relatives and protesting civil servants.

This film proves the sound political and historical instincts of our people. It makes no compromises, presenting unadulterated historical truth. It is not the usual historical romance. Despite what one might expect, the broad masses have taken it as a wakeup call, making it into a success with hardly a precedent in the history of German film. No one fails to be moved deeply by this film. The parallels to the present, the words that great king speaks, the spiritual crises that he and his people overcame through battle and passion, sometimes seem so striking that the makers of this film felt obliged to remark that it was planned not just before the holiday season for educational purposes, but rather in the early summer of 1940, with no idea of today's duties and challenges. The contemporary significance of the words and the resemblance of many events to those of today is not the result of conscious propaganda, but rather of deep historical laws.

That is the truth. Each century has its historical mission. They do not repeat themselves, indeed are so bound to their era that posterity can hardly bring more than historical understanding for the political problems of past epochs. What remains is the ways in which history is made, the style and manner of expression that a statesman or military genius uses, the resistance that raises him far above his era, above all the superhuman strength with which he meets the challenge. How can the fact that Frederick defeated the Austrians be relevant to our day? His value for the present generation is in the worth of his personality, in the powerful strength of his historic genius, in his faith that moved mountains, in his steadfastness in misfortune, in the completeness with which he fulfilled his secular mission and in the heroic isolation with which he bore the dark shadows of his fate. He was the one who said that he who wants to transform the world cannot at the same time enjoy it.

We are living in a time that is being transformed, one that therefore cannot be enjoyed. As perhaps never before in history, the fate of our people is in the hands of a single generation. Its desire for life, for self-assertion must

decide whether we are at the beginning of new and unprecedented age for our people, or whether we perhaps stand at the end of our history. Such moments in the rise and fall of nations always exert a powerful magic on brave and manly people. They see in the dangers and burdens a change to prove their mettle, which they know they must do if they are not to be weighed in the balance of fate and found wanting. The path to victory leads ever through the depths of danger and historical testing. A people must withstand many trials during a war. It must be armed against the tricks of a fickle fate that likes to subject its favorites to hard and bitter testing, until it finally wears the wreath of victory on its brow.

A generation blessed with a great personality in such dangerous times is to be envied. In the course of this war, people have found all sorts of causes that might bring victory. Some thought of greater economic and military resources, or a higher population, or a better geographical position, or the famed bravery of soldiers or tough civilian morale. One pitted system against system and world view against world view, seeking whose chances of success were better. We believe, however, that victory will fall to the side with the better leadership, as it always has. Leadership is crucial. If it also has the better material resources at its command, no power in the world can keep victory from it.

We have come through a winter whose hardness and length have no equal in human history. It posed challenges to our leaders, to the front and to the homeland that we only now realize. Later generations of historians will write the accounts of this most moving chapter of the great battle. No one among us can doubt the almost legendary heroism German soldiers demonstrated. If ever our people have shown that we are not only able along with our allies to assume the leading role on our continent, but that we have a historical right to do so, it was here. The German people proved its merit this past winter. A nation that survives such a test is destined for victory.

How often in these last hard weeks and months, the German people looked in spirit to the Führer. Never has the whole nation felt as bound to him as in these hard times, which have spared no one. We felt as if we had to see him, be it only in a photograph, to gain the strength each needs to overcome the difficult daily tasks we all face. Each of us has felt obligated to him! Each word that he spoke to the nation was for every man woman and child, for every solder, worker, and farmer an order! All were with him, without many words and without being told! The whole nation lived in the unspoken

assurance that while we were dealing with our lesser or greater troubles, he was fighting his gigantic battle in the East. He planned until late into the night, weighing and risking, standing watch at his headquarters. From there his will flowed to the most distant part of the battlefield, filling even the last soldier in the most embattled unit.

The power of his personality is felt nowhere more powerfully than at the front. A soldier must feel led; otherwise, he cannot endure the daily risk of life. When does he need that more than in those hours when he must risk his life for that of the nation, far from his commander, following the leading of duty and conscience? This is where the value of a great and powerful personality is proven, that which as Goethe says is the highest blessing among mankind. The confidence that there is one who stand above all, who knows all and weighs all, who knows the sorrow and pain of his people even without daily contact, who feels each individual loss that touches a mother, a women, or children, yet still is able to summon the strength to advance the greater national life of his people — this confidence lets one endure all the sacrifices and burdens of the day more easily. Nothing is harder than to accept the responsibility for the future of a great nation. It requires not only courage, the readiness to risk all, bravery of soul and steadfastness of the heart, but above all renunciation. From this renunciation grows the historical personality able to endure the lonely heights at which the sole duty is to serve the cause.

This is how the German people saw the Führer in the past winter. Surrounded by his aides, politicians, and generals, surrounded by the love of countless millions of people, and yet in the end relying on himself, carrying the heavy burden of responsibility on his shoulders alone, fighting for the life and fate of his people. No matter how high we may climb, whatever the burdens we may carry, each of us has at least one who is still above him, on whom we may rely, whom we may obey, because he leads and orders, because he takes the heaviest weight from us when it grows too great for us, who fills us with new strength when we lose courage, begin to doubt, or tire. He reminds us of the great lessons of our time, of our worldview, and gives us new life. Whether we have the great fortune who work in his vicinity or even with him personally, or whether we are called to fight for him as unknown soldiers, workers, or farmers, we all feel a strength that supports and sustains us. We feel ourselves safe in the protection of a man who has changed our century. We need only follow. His task is to show the way. He stands alone, waging a titanic battle with fate for the life of our people.

On the eve of his 53rd birthday, the whole nation gathers around the loudspeaker. It is far more than a festive event. It confirms what all Germans sense and feel, indeed more deeply and with greater obligation than ever before. In some sense, it is a renewal of our loyalty and faith, proven already a million-fold through deeds, through uncounted sacrifices, at the risk of body and life, in a multitude of bitter deaths. It does not need words.

If ever the German people have felt united in thought and will, then it is in this: to serve him and to obey his commands. The sounds of heroic and powerful music streaming from every German heart raises our resolve to a solemn and soaring height. When we finish our celebration, the voices of men and the sounds of instruments will join in the great conclusion to the Ninth Symphony. As the powerful Ode to Joy sounds and a sense of the greatness and scope of these times reaches even to the most remote German hut, as its sounds reach to distant countries where German forces stand watch, each of us, man or woman, child or soldier, farmer or worker or civil servant will know both the seriousness of the hour and the joy of being a witness and a participant in this great historical epoch of our people.

We call the eternal power that rules over us the Almighty, Fate, or the Good Father, he who as the Ninth Symphony says, lives beyond the stars. We ask the Almighty to preserve the Führer, to give him strength and protection, to favor his work, to increase our conviction, to make our hearts steadfast and our souls strong, to give our people victory after its battles and sacrifices, to bring the times to fulfillment.

There is no greater good fortune on earth than to serve a brilliant leader, to do his work. May we do that each day. The difficulty of our day is also its greatness. We would change places with on one. In gratitude and loyalty, we send the Führer our greetings. An unbreakable band unites the front and the homeland. Germans throughout the world are united in the fervent wish that we bring each year on the eve of his birthday: May he remain to us what he was and is:
Our Hitler!